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NOTES ON MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT.

AMERICAN CITIES.

New York.*—*Greater New York.* The preliminary draft of a charter, prepared by a sub-committee of the Greater New York commission's sub-committee, was made public in November. It is remarkable that the draft has been received with the same apathy as the New York public has manifested at every step of the Greater New York movement. It is probable that the draft will be changed materially before it is reported to the commission for final action. As the commission must make its final report to the legislature by the first of February, it seems improbable that the public will have any adequate opportunity to express an intelligent opinion upon the proposed charter. It is now understood that the committee on draft will not be prepared to report finally to the commission before the first of January. The indications are that the proposed charter will be so bulky and so detailed in its provisions that neither the legislature nor the public will be able to pass upon it intelligently before the adjournment of the legislature in the spring. If the proposed charter should become law, it would immediately be subjected to a process of amendment which would soon reduce it to a condition of incoherency like that in which the special laws relating to the municipality of New York now are.

Philadelphia.—*Annual Report of Municipal League.* The Board of Managers of the Municipal League, in their annual report for the year ending September 15, 1896, indicate an increase of membership from 3693 to 5105, or 39 per cent. There are twenty-four ward organizations, as compared with fifteen last year, and other evidences of continued interest and increased activity. Although the successful candidates of the League have been few in number, yet the votes polled have been more numerous than ever before. The League has taken a definite place in the local party-life. In addition to the actual campaign work, it has carried on an educational crusade through lectures, pamphlets and other efforts. The report urges more active service on the part of local trade organizations, especially of the Chamber of Commerce. In a number of the Eastern and Western cities, such organizations have played an important part in the work of municipal reform. Good municipal government contributes both

* Communication of James W. Pryor, Esq.

directly and indirectly to commercial prosperity, and although the business motive is probably inadequate to develop continuous interest in local affairs, it is an element which ought not to be ignored.

Report of Committee of Municipal League.—During the past year a committee of the Municipal League has been considering the operation of the Act of 1885, known as the Bullitt Bill. The act applies to all cities of the first class, of which Philadelphia is the only example. Since the act went into operation in 1887, those who have been watching its workings have felt that some of its provisions require amendment. There has been a desire on the part of many to have the principle of concentration of executive responsibility, upon which the act is based, more consistently carried out. The Municipal League committee embodies its conclusions in a report containing seven bills.

The first concerns the system of granting franchises. At present councils have full and unrestricted power to determine the conditions upon which public franchises should be enjoyed. The bill provides that the grant shall be for a definite period, with thirty years as a maximum; secondly, that a reasonable annual compensation be paid, in the form of a percentage of gross receipts; in the absence of any express stipulation, such payment to be 5 per cent; thirdly, that all structures over, upon, or under, the public highway and all structures of a permanent character, used in the operation of a franchise, shall revert to the city free of cost at the expiration of the grant; and finally, that any extension of the grant shall be subject to the same conditions as the original concession.

The second aims at a radical change in the upper branch of the city legislature. It provides that the Select Council shall be composed of fifteen members, to be elected on a general ticket for a term of three years. The committees of Select Council are to be elected by the members instead of being appointed by the president. In Common Council, the basis of representation is increased to one representative per 6000 taxable inhabitants.

Another bill is intended to prevent the simultaneous holding of state and local offices, and provides that "no member of the legislature of the state, of the United States, nor any one holding any office or employment from, or under, the city, county, state, or the United States, except that of notary public, shall, at the same time, be a member of Select or Common Council." In the same bill is contained the provision that "no person having any interest in any contract for work to be done for, or materials to be supplied the city or any department thereof, whether as principal or as surety, agent, or employe of such principal, shall be, at the same time, a member of Select or Common Council." This provision is simply declaratory of

the present law as interpreted by the Supreme Court. The wording has been changed in order to guard against any future deviation from the present interpretation.

A fourth seeks to reorganize the civil service system of the city. Three distinct objects have here been kept in view: first, to give the mayor a more complete supervision over the administration of the civil service law; secondly, to increase the safeguards against arbitrary dismissal of officers; and, thirdly, to prescribe with greater minuteness the procedure of the Civil Service Board. At the present time the mayor must approve the decision of the court of trial or inquiry in cases involving policemen or firemen. The bill gives to the mayor the further power to overrule the decision of the court, to dismiss the accused, or to take such other action as he may think proper. The bill lays further restrictions on the Civil Service Board, in providing that appointments, or promotions, shall be made from among a definite number, not exceeding three, of those graded highest as the result of the competitive examination. Further, that all appointments, promotions, transfers, resignations, removals, and vacancies shall be fully certified to the Civil Service Board, in writing, within five days thereafter, by the officer making the same, with the reasons therefor.

A fifth bill contemplates the rearrangement of departmental functions by placing the lighting of streets, alleys, and highways under the Department of Public Safety. This bill, furthermore, contains several provisions relating to contracts. In addition to the present safeguards, a clause is inserted prescribing that all estimates for work to be done, should be in writing, signed by the proper officer, and shall be filed and registered in the mayor's office, by date, number and contents, a copy to be furnished the comptroller before the contract shall be signed and become valid. This bill also provides that no contract shall be made with any firm, co-partnership, corporation, or association, by, or in which a councilman is employed in any capacity whatever. This is meant to supplement the present law, which simply prohibits contracts with firms or corporations, in which a councilman, officer, or employe of the city, is a member. Another clause seeks to prohibit the constant interference of councils with purely administrative functions, and provides that, "Councils shall not interfere with the control or discretion of the departments as to the location of lights, sewers, gas or water pipes, street improvements or repairs, telegraph or other wires; nor, shall councils pass any special ordinances as to the location of such works, unless an ordinance is necessary for such purposes under existing laws, and not then unless there has been a previous written report thereon, by the proper department."

Finally, a bill is proposed by the committee concerning political contributions by the officers or employes of the city. All such assessments or solicitations for contributions for political or partisan purposes, are strictly forbidden. Violations of these provisions are declared a misdemeanor, liable to a fine of not less than \$50, nor more than \$1000, or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year, or to both fine and imprisonment in the discretion of the court.

Filtration.—As a result of years of continuous agitation by medical societies, civic associations and reform unions, councils have decided to borrow \$3,000,000 for the establishment of a filtration plant. The pollution of the Schuylkill River and the consequent dangers to the public health, have been discussed in innumerable addresses, pamphlets and reports. Mr. Hazen, a civil engineer of Boston, recently prepared for the Women's Health Protective Association, of Philadelphia, a report, which examines the sources of supply and the causes of contamination, and which reaches the conclusion that \$3,391,000 would be sufficient to establish a filtration plant adequate for the needs of the city, provided that the average per capita consumption be somewhat reduced. At present, at 183 gallons per capita daily, it far exceeds reasonable needs. A system of water meters would reduce the waste without necessarily decreasing the legitimate use of water. Without such a system, the cost of filtration will be considerably more than the above estimate. Mr. Hazen recommends a system of sand filtration, such as is in use in Hamburg, Altona, Liverpool, Amsterdam and London. Councils have not, as yet, decided upon any particular system.

Boston.*—After wasting many millions of dollars in giving away public franchises to private corporations, Boston has at last made a beginning in the right direction. The Pneumatic Transit Company was recently given by the Board of Aldermen a franchise for laying its tubes in the streets, but Mayor Quincy vetoed the action on the ground that the privilege should be paid for. A difficulty in the way was the absence of legislation empowering the city to make a charge for such franchises. But finally a contract was devised which the corporation counsel pronounced valid. It provides for payment to the city for the first year of one-half of one per cent of the gross receipts of the company, the amount increasing each year by one-quarter of one per cent, until the ninth year, when the maximum rate of two and one-half per cent should be reached. This is an insignificant return for the privilege acquired, especially as the franchise appears to be in perpetuity and there is no provision permitting the city to take over

* Communication of Sylvester Baxter, Esq.

the business. It establishes the principle, however, and the municipality may make better bargains hereafter.

Plans have been adopted for the new public bath-house to be erected on Dover street, at a cost of \$65,000. The baths are fifty in number,—mostly shower-baths,—thirty-three for males and seventeen for women. There are eight tub baths. It is to be purely a "cleanliness bath," with no provisions for swimming. Swimming, however, is a most important accomplishment in the scheme of physical training and would be a particularly valuable feature in attracting boys and young men. In accordance with the principle followed by Boston in all public conveniences of the kind, the committee in charge proposes to make the baths entirely free. In all European cities it is the custom to charge a small fee. It would seem advisable at least to make a sufficient charge for towels and soap to cover the cost.

The new public bath, which the adjacent town of Brookline has under consideration, is a much larger affair, and makes extensive provisions for swimming. It is in design appropriate to its civic character, and stands detached from other outbuildings.*

The swimming-bath occupies a large room with a barrel-arched ceiling. The tank is 120 feet long by 35 wide. There are forty-two dressing-rooms beneath a gallery surrounding the hall. In another room, designed for a swimming-school, is a plunge-bath thirty-two by fifteen feet. There are also fifteen shower-baths and three tub baths.

The school board of Boston has also established shower-baths in one of the grammar school buildings, and its success will doubtless lead to the general adoption of the principle.

Buffalo.†—On the sixteenth of November, 1896, the power from Niagara Falls was turned on in Buffalo for the first time, and was used successfully on the following day in running the cars of the Buffalo Street Railway Company which thus becomes the first Buffalo customer of the Power Company. The latter, therefore, has actually delivered power in Buffalo seven months before the date specified for such delivery in the grant of its franchise—June 1, 1897.

In spite of strenuous opposition from the politicians of his own party, the mayor has reappointed for a second term the present Health Commissioner, Dr. Ernest Wende, who had proved his eminent fitness for the position. The city's death-rate during the term of office of the

* The plans, together with illustrations of the exterior and interior, appeared in the *American Architect*, for October 31.

† Communication of A. L. Richardson.

present health commissioner has been considerably reduced. The best and most prominent citizens united, without regard to party, in urging the mayor to regard nothing but the welfare of the city in this important matter, and his action in complying with their request is both courageous and creditable. He has also appointed a new fire commissioner and a new commissioner of public works. Neither of the gentlemen appointed has ever held public office, but both are said to be very reputable and successful business men. On the whole, the idea that "municipal government is business, not politics," seems to be making some progress in Buffalo.

Under the new State Constitution, the elections of 1897 will be for municipal officers only. This fact presents an opportunity for good government clubs and similar organizations all over the state, and those of Buffalo propose to avail themselves of it. Twice in succession, in the past, it has happened that candidates endorsed by the Confederated Good Government Clubs, though of opposite parties, have been elected; and there is every reason to believe that next year, when there are no national or state questions to divert attention, their influence, if properly exerted, will be greater than ever.

New Orleans.—The new charter of the city, which was approved on the seventh of July, 1896, and which went into effect immediately, although the first election under the new charter, will not be held until April, 1900, contains a number of interesting provisions, some of which make important changes in the form of government. In the first place, the council is to have but one chamber, composed of seventeen members, to be elected by the voters of the respective wards or districts which they are to represent. Those who advocated a system of election by general ticket were unable to carry their point. The law requires that the candidate must be an actual resident of the ward or district at least one year preceding his election. The members of the council are to receive twenty dollars each for attendance at each regular monthly meeting; on condition, however, that they shall have attended all called or special meetings during such month. The president of the council, who is to be elected by the members thereof, is to receive an annual salary of \$2000.

The executive power is vested in a mayor, comptroller, treasurer, commissioner of public works, commissioner of police and public buildings and city engineer. Of these the mayor, treasurer and comptroller are to be elected for a term of four years. The commissioner of public works, the commissioner of police and public buildings and the city engineer are to be selected by the mayor. The appointment is to be made subject to the consent of the council. The

incumbent may be removed at pleasure by the mayor on serving such official with his reasons in writing, and transmitting a copy thereof to the council, to be placed on its minutes. Under similar conditions, the mayor may appoint and remove the city attorney, the city notary and the board of civil service commissioners.

The civil service provisions furnish the basis for the development of a thoroughly organized civil service system. One of the provisions, which embodies the result of much experience in other cities, prescribes that the head of the department or office in which a classified position is to be filled, must notify the board of that fact, which commission shall certify to the appointing officer the name and address of the candidate standing highest upon the register for the class or grade to which said position belongs, except that in cases of laborers, where a choice by competition is impracticable, said commission may provide, by its rules, that the selections shall be made by lot from among those candidates proved fit by examination.

Another section provides that ordinances granting franchises, after having passed the council, shall be published in full in an official journal for two weeks, and thereafter shall be transmitted to the mayor, whose duty it shall be to cause the comptroller, treasurer, commissioner of public works, commissioner of police and public buildings and city engineer, to publicly assemble in the council chamber, to consider and pass upon such ordinances. Any four of these may approve, amend, or reject the ordinance; all amendments, however, must be concurred in by the council. If passed, the ordinance is then referred to the mayor for his consideration, and if vetoed by him shall not become a law unless supported by two-thirds of the council and four members of the board above described. Special provisions require that no franchises shall be granted, renewed, extended or disposed of for the lighting of streets and public places, or disposal of sewerage or garbage, or for large and valuable franchises similarly affecting the public health or comfort, or for the operation of any street or belt railroad, except after three months' publication in the official journal of the terms and specifications of said franchise, and after the same has been adjudicated by the comptroller to the highest bidder. All street or belt railroad franchises are to be sold to the person, corporation or corporations offering the highest percentage of gross annual receipts to be derived from such franchise during the term thereof, the percentage to be estimated on the gross annual income derived from such franchise after deducting only all taxes paid by such person or corporation to the city and state by reason of the ownership or operation of said franchise.

FOREIGN CITIES.

London.*—Improved Housing Conditions. The Boundary Street scheme is an illustration of the mode of dealing with an unhealthy and over-crowded area of considerable extent. This scheme deals with an area of some fifteen acres in the parish of Bethnal Green, and involves the demolition of 728 houses, and the closing and re-arrangement of twenty streets. The whole of the fifteen acres will be entirely cleared of buildings, with the exception of two churches, three elementary schools, and one large factory. It has been re-planned on the radiating system of streets. A circular garden 270 feet in diameter will occupy the centre of the area, and from this, seven avenues varying from fifty to sixty feet in width radiate, the buildings being arranged upon the intervening sites. Great care is being taken in the development of this area to render it a good example. This is the largest scheme that has been undertaken in London under the Act of Parliament known as the "Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890." Its object is, moreover, almost entirely confined to the provision of better dwellings, and it has not been to any material extent affected by the need for better and more direct thoroughfares, a matter which has hitherto largely influenced smaller schemes of a similar nature.

Although this district is situated within one mile of the centre of the city of London, its inhabitants were of the poorest class, a whole family frequently living in a single room. The streets were narrow, the spaces at the backs of the houses were small, and the houses had in many cases been made still worse by the erection of buildings used for trade and manufacture. The houses were old and dilapidated, the rooms were dark, dirty, and unwholesome, and the inhabitants were subject to the diseases resulting from these conditions. Many of the inhabitants were of a very low type, but some were of the honest working class, such as costermongers, machinists, market-porters, toy-makers, warehousemen, and others engaged in kindred occupations.

For the four years ending 1889, the average mortality on this area exceeded 40 per 1000, whereas the average mortality of the parish of Bethnal Green, in which the area is situated, was no more than 22.8 per 1000. That of "Registration London" for the same period was 18.8 per 1000.

By the Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890 it is provided that the total number of persons displaced from an unhealthy area shall be accommodated in sanitary dwellings upon the area or within

*Communication of C. J. Stewart, Esq., Clerk of London County Council.

its immediate vicinity. The Secretary of State for Home Affairs, is, however, empowered to sanction a scheme which provides dwellings for one-half the number of persons who will be displaced, and this is sometimes the largest number that can be provided for. Upon the Boundary Street area new dwellings will be provided for 4700 persons, the number displaced being 5719.

The new buildings are classed under two heads: self-contained dwellings and associated dwellings. The tenements are arranged in blocks mostly five stories in height, each block facing one of the new streets and having in rear an ample yard space or playground. In the self-contained dwellings, each tenement has its own entrance door leading directly from a wide passage, or from the landing of the staircase, and is complete in itself, having living and sleeping accommodation, scullery, water-closet, and all necessary conveniences for its exclusive use. The associated dwellings are arranged in groups of tenements, entered from a common passage or corridor, one staircase thus serving a greater number of tenements than in the case of the "self-contained." They have common sculleries to serve several families on each floor, usually arranged, along with the water-closets, on the opposite side of the passage from the tenements.

The tenements consist of one room, two rooms, three rooms, four rooms and five rooms, respectively. Of these, the one-room dwellings are very few, and, except where they can be provided very conveniently, are not provided at all. The chief demand is for tenements of two and three rooms, which families of four and six persons can inhabit. It is required by the London Building Act 1894 that all habitable rooms shall be eight feet six inches in height, and the council, by regulations of its own, has decided that the family living room shall have a floor measurement of at least 144 superficial feet, clear of all fire-places and other solid obstructions, and that the bedrooms shall measure at least ninety-six superficial feet. It is, however, considered advisable for every tenement to have at least one bedroom of not less than 120 feet superficial area. In the single-room tenements, the area of the room is 180 square feet. The stairs and landings are at least three feet six inches wide. The sculleries in the self-contained dwellings are attached to the living rooms, and every water-closet is aerially disconnected from the rooms. Small larders are provided in many of the tenements.

Every tenement is fitted with a cooking range, two feet six inches wide. Particular attention has been paid to this, so as to obtain the most suitable range for the class of tenant provided for, and it has been found that a self-setting range, with the oven at the side of the fire, is best; the fire is not deep, and is easily convertible into open or

close, a large open fire being necessary during inclement weather, and much appreciated by the tenants, the close fire being necessary for cooking purposes. A ventilated food cupboard is fixed in every tenement which has not a larder, and there are also provided: a coal cupboard or box, dresser, shelves, cupboard for plates, etc., and about half a dozen coat hooks, which are fixed to a rail on the wall. Every tenement is fitted with gas, which is delivered through a prepayment, penny-in-the-slot, automatic meter. A pendant is provided in each living room, and a bracket in each bedroom. Connections are also provided for cooking rings or stoves in suitable positions in living rooms or sculleries. The water-closets are separated from the rooms, and great care is taken to make the drainage practically perfect. The closets are of a type called wash-down, and are solidly set in concrete. They are flushed with two gallons of water. All the soil pipes are taken outside the buildings, and are thoroughly ventilated. The underground pipes are laid in straight runs from point to point, and each room is governed by a manhole. The waste pipes from scullery sinks and baths are similarly treated. The soil, waste, and rain-water pipes all discharge into one combined underground system. Baths with hot and cold water are provided in the associated dwellings on each landing, one bath serving several tenements. Suitable receptacles for dust and dry refuse are provided to each tenement, and arrangements are made for the removal of the dust at frequent intervals, twice a week being the usual rule.

The Council, holding as it does a strong opinion that the washing and drying of clothes should not be done in the tenements themselves, has erected a steam laundry in a central position for the use of the tenants of the whole of the dwellings on the area. In addition to the apparatus for washing and drying clothes, which is of the most approved type, baths, and reading and recreation rooms are provided in the laundry buildings.

With regard to the cost of the dwellings it is the intention of the Council to provide these dwellings if possible at such rates as the persons who have been displaced from the unwholesome dwellings could afford to pay. It is the rule of the Council that in connection with any specified housing scheme or area the rents charged for the dwellings shall not exceed those ruling in the neighborhood. The rents receivable must be sufficient to pay all outgoings of every kind, together with interest at three per cent (three per cent being the rate at which the Council can borrow the necessary money) on the total outlay on dwellings and land, and to provide a sinking fund to redeem the total outlay by a cumulative annuity at a certain rate of interest within a given period; so that at the end of that period the total

outlay incurred shall be repaid. The average cost of the Council's tenement dwellings is about £62 per room, reckoning sculleries as rooms.

In consequence of the changed conditions following the reconstruction of such a large area, it is found difficult to let the dwellings to the class of persons who have been displaced. In many cases the people have been so long accustomed to live in dirty rooms that they cannot be induced to keep these rooms clean, nor do they desire to live in rooms of this class. In fact, they very rarely apply for these dwellings, and as many months must elapse between the time when they are turned out of the unwholesome dwellings and the time when the new dwellings are ready, they have generally succeeded in establishing themselves in other houses of a description somewhat similar to those they have lived in. The new dwellings are, however, always let to persons of the working class, and it is hoped that, in course of time, they will cause a marked improvement in the kind of accommodation provided for that class.

Aberdeen.—Municipal lodging-houses have become so common in the English and Scotch cities that the erection of a new and large establishment in Aberdeen attracts but little attention. In Glasgow the municipal lodging-houses are gradually supplanting all private institutions. The possibility of combining cleanliness, sanitary surroundings and comfort with low charges has been fully demonstrated. In the new building, which the town of Aberdeen is constructing, there is to be accommodations for about 250 lodgers. As in all the other municipal lodging-houses, a library, recreation room, facilities for cooking, washing and bath will be provided free of charge. The possibility of counteracting the temptations of the saloon by means of such establishments has been shown in London and Glasgow. Hot water and all cooking utensils are provided; a large cooking-stove is kept in operation day and night. For a few cents a meal, wholesome and nutritious, may be prepared. With all such conveniences provided free of charge, the municipal lodging-houses have nevertheless proven successful and remunerative, from 3 to 5 per cent being the average return on the investment.